



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

**Date:** 2/19/2004

**GAIN Report Number:** AU4006

## Austria

### Biotechnology

## Major Food Retailers Say "NO" to Biotech Foods 2004

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**Report Highlights:**

Major Supermarket chains in Austria, e.g., Billa, Merkur and Hofer, announced that they would stock and sell no Biotech food products. A recent survey conducted by Global 2000 and Greenpeace shows that 90% of the Austrian food retail sector agreed not to sell food containing genetically modified products. The new EU labeling regulation on GM food applies on April 18, 2004. Little impact foreseen on US trade.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Vienna [AU1]  
[AU]

Austria is the strongest EU opponent to agricultural biotechnology or as they say in Austria GMOs. Consumers and governmental decision makers see no benefits to Austrians from Biotech agricultural products and thus object to food containing them.

Most of Austrian food retail companies will do without Biotech food in the future. According to a recent survey conducted by Global 2000 and Greenpeace over 90% of the Austrian food retail sector agreed to refrain from stocking or selling genetically modified organisms. Those companies will not sell food covered by the new EU regulations on GM food and feed (Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003) and traceability on GMO's (Regulation (EC) No 1830/2003), which came into force on November 7, 2003 and have to be applied in all member states on April 18, 2004. After the effective date all food and feed products containing 0.9 % and more ingredients deriving from GMO's, have to be labeled.

Almost all big Austrian leading supermarket chains like Spar, Billa, Merkur, Mondo, Emma, Hofer, Adeg, Magnet, Zielpunkt and Lidl emitted written guarantees that they would not sell GM food in their stores. Also the biggest Austrian food processors Unilever (Eskimo/Iglo), Nestle, Kraft-Jacobs-Suchard and Masterfood guaranteed not to sell GM products in Austria.

As all the big Austrian food retail chains already demand GMO-free certificates from suppliers and importers for their food products in the past, especially for soybean and corn products. There might be an impact on products containing additives like GMO starch or lecithin. It is difficult to estimate how many food products will need to be labeled "containing GMOs" according to the new regulations, and therefore will be taken off the shelves.

So far feed industry did not show any official hostile reaction on GM feed. But if pressure from NGO's and consumers is placed on feed industry, bulk commodities derived from GMO varieties will be at risk.

Many Europeans believe that there are no GMOs in Europe. They are unaware that Biotech corn is planted in Spain. They are unaware that much of the imported soybeans available on the world market are Biotech. They also fail to understand that much of their bread and beer is produced using Biotech produced yeast and cheese and yogurt is produced with Biotech rennet rather than use the liquid from a cow's stomach. However, in a recent visit to a small cheese making plant in Vorarlberg Province the manager proudly demonstrated how a cow's stomach is used to curdle cheese.